1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

Aug. 6.th 1940 We start for Lakes.
Aug. 7.th 1940 [John Keats] meet us on trail.
. . . . . .
Aug. 25.th 1940 We go to mountain for shap [sheep]
Aug. 26.th 1940 We stay at the mountain yet.
Aug. 27.th 1940 We go down to Lake.
Aug. 28.th 1940 Old Man [Wiley] and me and [Billy Barre] hunt moose Kill one moose.
Aug. 29.th 1940 I kill two Bull moose. and We goe home, for the camp.

Young people occasionally make photographic records with simple folding or box cameras; these are generally pictures of friends and relatives. The films are mailed to large cities for developing and printing. Great pleasure is found in looking at photographs, even after they have been seen many times before. Informants were also pleased to show a copy of the *National Geographic Magazine*, for May 1942, containing the record of the Albees' trip through the Upper Liard River valley and showing pictures of both deceased and living people.[14]

People communicate from one bank of a river to another by shouting; young men may also whistle. In the bush two smoke fires are said to be the signal for distress. Generally, if a person becomes lost in the bush, he fires a large caliber rifle and then waits for an answer. If he is injured, he may fire a number of shots in quick succession. Between winter settlements located as many as eight miles apart, gun fire is sometimes used for signaling.

In winter, if anyone leaves a settlement for a visit to the trading post, he is sure to be given messages to the storemen requesting additional supplies and a small increase in credit. These messages are usually laboriously pencilled by someone who can write, verbal messages being ignored by traders unless accompanied by cash. Notes are sometimes left at cabins when the occupants go away. Such notes commonly explain the reason for leaving and give the destination of the occupants.[15] Ordinarily Indians have little occasion to write letters. When they wish to do so, help is usually solicited from the independent trader in Lower Post.

Visitors between winter settlements, or in summer, from other parts of the area, disseminate news. Such transmission generally occurs at informal gatherings, perhaps while the visitor is refreshing himself with a cup of tea. News circulated in this way includes accounts of illness, death, luck in hunting, and the progress of house construction, as well as the activities of traders and other white people. Such accounts very rarely contain personal items unfavorable to a subject, gossip of this kind being either suppressed or withheld for more intimate occasions.

Property

Among the Kaska Indians, property—that is, those social relationships controlling the use and alienation of some subject matter[16]—tends to be of relatively little importance.

[14] Albee and Albee, *Family Afoot in the Yukon Wilds* (1942).
[15] Albee and Albee, *Family Afoot in the Yukon Wilds* (1942), 60. The specimen note given by the authors is very similar to ones which we encountered three years later.
[16] Murdock, et. al., *Outline of Cultural Materials* (1945), 24.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

verbal directions.[28] Separated groups of travelers who had need to communicate with each other did so by means of a limited repertory of smoke signals like these: One smoke, "we have killed game"; two smokes, "come over here"; three or four smokes, "we have had an accident (or trouble)."

Men and women packed goods but characteristically women carried the heavier loads. Only lines were utilized in packing, pack sticks being unknown. Pack lines consisted of four-ply braided babiche line. In supporting a back load the line passed along the outside of the arms below the shoulders and proceeded around the top of the head slightly in front of the vertex. If a heavy load caused pack lines to slip down the arms, a padding of moss was added. Men carried small game by tying one end of a packline around the head and the other around the rear legs of the animal. Fowl were transported in sacks of fine, netted babiche lined with babiche hide. Tanned skin bags up to three feet square held clothing and meat in transport. The colon of an animal, closed at one end by sewing, provided a handy container for small tools. Berries and meat were held for short periods in birch-bark baskets. Dogs rarely packed goods prior to European contact. In the spring a pack dog's feet could be protected from crusted snow by moose-skin dog shoes in which small holes allowed the claws to project. Horses remained unseen until 1898.

In the absence of bark-chair baby carriers a woman transported her infant in a moose-skin bag lined with deep moss, the baby facing away from the mother. The bag hung against the mother's back supported by tanned-skin line. In winter a layer of fur lined the moss bag and insulated the child from the bitter cold. Following infancy children rode pick-a-back fashion on the mother's back, supported with a baby strap that passed around the outside of the woman's arms and was tied under her chin. A shawl of animal pelts, tanned with the hair on, provided protection from low temperature.

Several early travelers have remarked on the casual use of water transportation in the early post-contact period. Thus McConnell reports that the Indians "are very inferior canoemen, and are afraid to venture on the river except in its smoothest places. They seldom ascend the river with canoes, as they prefer to carry their outfits along the shore to tracking a boat against a rapid current, and in descending use small spruce bark canoes which they build in a couple of hours and abandon without much loss.[29] Pike writes, "the Cascas and Liard Indians are poor boatmen, and do not make much use of the waterways, preferring to pack heavy loads through the woods to working a canoe upstream; while, if they wish to run down a river, they can make a bark or skin canoe in a few hours, and lose nothing by throwing it away at the end of the run. The birch on the Upper Liard does not grow to a sufficient size to supply bark suitable for canoes so much used on the lower part of the river."[30]

[28] Among the Chilkat Tlingit there were true cardinal directions that took their names from the winds. Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950), 204.

[29] McConnell, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon and Mackenzie Basins* (1890), 35D.

[30] Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest* (1896), 81–82. Along the Pelly River this author "often noticed rafts tied upon the banks, evidently used by the Indians for crossing. . . . It is curious that they do not use canoes on such easily navigable streams, but prefer to pack a load on their backs and make a straight course for their hunting-grounds, crossing and recrossing the main stream to cut off a detour" (204).

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Dease River

vehicle. Women as well as men drew the toboggans, a harness for this purpose consisting of one moose-hide line passing around the outside of the arms and around the chest while another cord passed over the top of the head.

Snowshoe types included the round or Loucheux style (said to have been preferable because of its lighter weight) as well as the pointed variety. Function determined the length of these appliances, long shoes being best adapted for a hunter's swift travel in deep snow. Small shoes served well to break trail for a toboggan. In case of emergency a man made temporary snowshoes by bending and lashing a willow pole, which he then filled with heavy babiche line. Children usually employed such crude snowshoes throughout the winter. The customary division of labor appeared, a man constructing the framework while a woman applied the filling. Bone snowshoe needles contained a concave depression at one end that served to push the line between closely laid strands of filling.

In any season the order to travel required men to walk ahead of women, a pattern that allowed them to break trail for the women and children. Blazes consisted of willow and other branches broken in the direction taken. Sometimes men hung moss in the branches of a tree, laid down stones to indicate a course, or cut the trunks of trees with a caribou-horn adz. A single tree felled by fire provided a convenient bridge. Occasionally more complex spans containing a number of poles provided safer means for crossing a stream. The tump line facilitated packing and pack sticks remained unknown. Baby packs consisted of tanned skin padded with moss. In this container the child faced away from the mother. When old enough to leave the moss bag a youngster rode facing the mother on the latter's back supported by a baby strap that was passed around the outside of the arms and tied in front of the woman's breast. Such belts were often decorated with porcupine-quill embroidery. Bark baby carriers were not made.

For communication between traveling groups, the Indians sometimes made use of smoke signals, a single smoke calling attention to a game kill. Also runners might be sent to invite people to the scene of a kill, young men being able to cover 20 miles by running in a single day. Picture writing or drum language were both lacking.

For water transportation the Dease River people relied on rafts, moose-skin boats (which occasionally reached a length of 20 feet), dugouts, and spruce-bark canoes. A raft contained the necessary number of poles lashed to crosspieces with tanned-skin line. Pointing the bow gave the craft greater speed. An earthen fireplace was often situated somewhat forward on a pointed raft, but people invariably spent nights on shore in the course of traveling. Two varieties of spruce-bark canoes may be distinguished, small vessels serving one or two hunters and larger boats for traveling. The bark was sewn to the framework with spruce root line. Decked canoes, sails, or canoes traveling in pairs could not be recalled for the pre-contact period. Men cut paddles from spruce wood. Rounded handles were denied for these implements, the informant claiming that the upper end of the shaft contained a crosspiece on which the canoer fastened his grip. Such crutch-like handles must have resembled the type in use on the Northwest Coast. A ridge was left on the center of the blade, the edges of which might be decorated with notches burned into the wood.